

PEOPLE'S TRIBUNE

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Healthcare Rally in San Francisco in June.

PHOTO/BILL HACKWELL, ANSWER

THE ELECTIONS AND CORPORATE POWER

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PHOTO/ISTOCKPHOTO.COM

Two Choices: Starvation or Dump the System

The image of the pin stripped tycoon taking food from the mouths of starving babies is the most compelling in labor history. That image of a known and widely despised, individual capitalist was a call to drop all sectarian differences and unite around the basic instinct of preserving the young generation. In the past it was relatively simple to organize a fight against a few capitalists or against a regional corporation. Today, we confront a world-wide class, which will stop at nothing to increase their profits.

People throughout the world are pushed toward an abyss of mass starvation while farmers are paid not to plant crops and "surplus commodities" are dumped into the ocean. In just three years, the price of staple foods such as wheat, corn and rice has almost doubled. Snatching food from the mouths of babes is no longer a local crime done by individual capitalists. The growing threat of starvation is world-wide and an integral part of this last stage of the capitalist system.

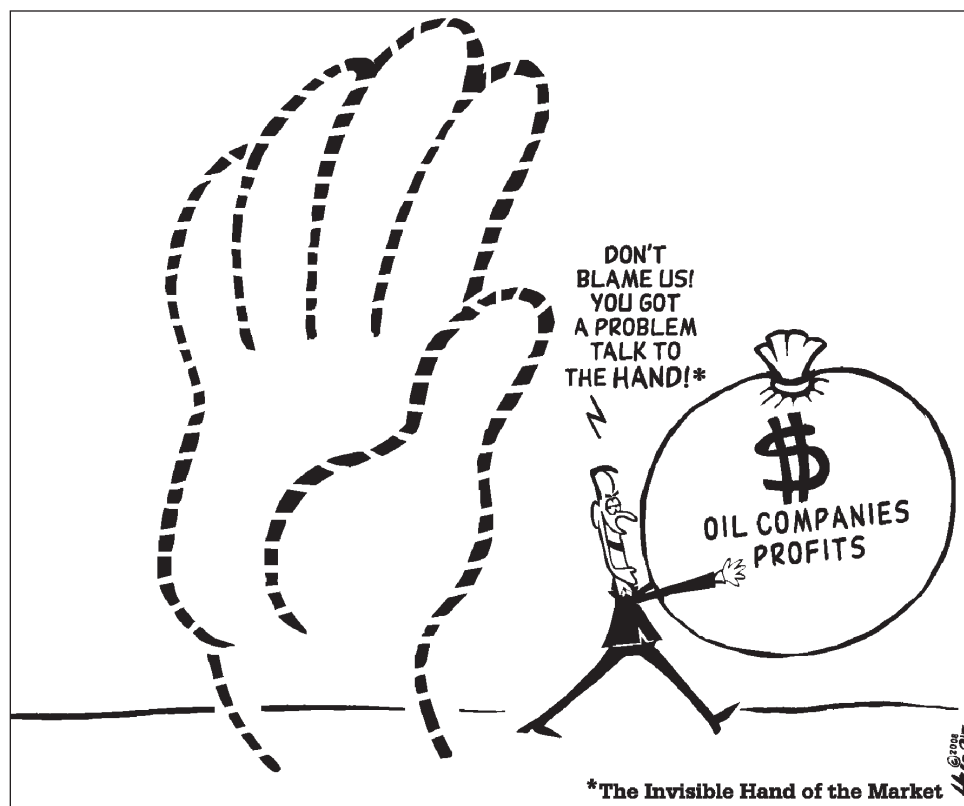
What is behind this frightful increase in mass starvation? While there is never a single or simple answer to such questions there is always a central and key link that pulls the entire chain forward. That link is the fundamental changes taking place in production and its effect on money. Money has been a measure of value. Value is labor time spent in production. Thus the role of money was to exchange ten hours of human labor time that went into making a table for ten hours that went into making a stove. The introduction of automation in production meant that we can no longer measure the value (amount of labor time) in an automobile or a chair. The capitalists could only set a price

and that price was the highest the market would bear. As the cost of production went down because of automation, the price of things went up. This meant that all the money went in one direction and all the poverty went in another.

As profits fell in the manufacturing sector, the investors and speculators

bubble there. When that bubble burst, speculators moved into the commodity market creating bubbles in energy and food without regard to the suffering they are creating. There is plenty of energy and plenty of food — it is being priced beyond the reach of the people.

Are we going to continue to passive-



searched for new areas to profitably invest. That money was moved to speculation. To speculate means to bid up the price of something in hopes of selling it at a profit. Thus we saw speculation create the so-called "dot-com" bubble. When that bubble burst, the money was shifted into real estate creating a

ly starve while the speculators bring in trillions or will we defend the expanding wretched of the earth? There is no going back to "the good old days" and there is no going forward without dumping this system and creating one based on the well being of the people.

Why Revolutionaries Need A Press

From the Editors

We are sometimes asked "Why do revolutionaries need a press?" The answer has to do with this moment in history. People are struggling just to get the basic necessities of life. Historical forces beyond anyone's control have set the stage for a new society to be built, but from this point on, how things turn out depends on what people think. This means that those of us who are seeking fundamental change are engaged in a battle of ideas, a struggle to win the hearts and minds of the people. If we don't raise the consciousness of the people and unite them around a vision of a better world and a strategy to achieve it, then we'll fail in our effort to build a just and free society. To win the battle of ideas, we need a press.

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PEOPLE'S TRIBUNE

The People's Tribune is devoted to the proposition that an economic system that can't or won't feed, clothe and house its people ought to be and will be changed. To that end, this paper is a tribune of the people. It is the voice of millions struggling for survival. It strives to educate politically those millions on the basis of their own experience. It is a tribune to bring them together, to create a vision of a better world, and a strategy to achieve it.

We find ourselves at a historic moment as labor-replacing technology leads us on a path toward the decisive reconstruction of society. Who will win — the capitalists or the growing mass of poor — will depend on winning the hearts and minds of the people to create a society whose fruits benefit all.

We offer our pages as a vehicle for the new ideas rooted in our reality, and to be the voice of those who seek to raise the consciousness of society. Let us gather our collective experience, intelligence and commitment to bring forth a vision that changes America into a society "by the people, of the people, for the people."

PEOPLE'S TRIBUNE EDITORIAL POLICY:

Articles that are unsigned, such as the front page and editorials, reflect the views of the editorial board. Bylined articles reflect the views of the authors, and may or may not reflect the views of the editorial board.

Deadlines for articles and art: The deadline for articles, photographs and other art is the first of each month for the issue that comes out at the beginning of the following month. For example, the deadline for the June issue is May 1. Articles should be as short as possible, and no longer than 600 words. We reserve the right to edit articles to conform to space limitations.

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THE ELECTIONS AND CORPORATE POWER

The majority of the American people and the people of the world have suffered eight painful and brutal years of the Bush administration's lawlessness and criminality. As a result, people are hoping for change. People want the kind of change that addresses their needs. However, the kind of change we want and the change we are likely to get are two different things. Simply put, hope is not a strategy.

With massive layoffs occurring daily, putting the "official" unemployment rate at more than 5.5 % and food and gas prices skyrocketing, combined with home foreclosures at an all-time record high and millions more denied much needed health care, it is no surprise that the American people are hoping for much needed change. Add to that misery, the more than \$160 billion allocated by Congress last month for another year of Iraq war funding, and there are more than enough reasons for wanting change.

The American people want specific answers and solutions. They want a political program that straightforwardly addresses and solves these major issues and problems. They want po-



Health Care Rally in San Francisco

PHOTO/BILL CARPENTER

litical representatives who will fight for such a political program. Instead, they are receiving general appeals and moral platitudes. Neither presidential candidate, nor any congressional candidates are offering any specific political program to address and solve the mounting problems faced by the vast majority of the American people.

A quick look at the fundraising figures for the 2008 election cycle tells the story. Both parties' presidential candidates have raised nearly \$500 million, with most of it coming from big individual donations. In addition, both parties have received from the "industry sectors" (corporations) another \$500 million, not to mention the additional hundreds of millions donated by "soft money" conduits and corporate political action committees. One needs to follow the money, to see who owes who, come November.

During the last week of August the Democratic National Convention will be held in Denver, Colorado, followed by the Republican National Convention in Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota during

the first week of September. Both parties will adopt a political program that benefits and represents the economic interests of corporations and the rich and powerful. Multinational corporations will put forward a program to further consolidate and expand their power. We should expect that neither convention will adopt a political program to address the needs of the American people.

Under these conditions, and with the economy tanking toward a financial meltdown, the American people can expect more misery, pain and brutality. Unfortunately, this is the grim reality of the situation. Simply hoping for change will not achieve the desired result. It can be turned around only with a long-term strategy to build a political alternative in opposition to the corporate American two-party system.

Politics is based on economic self interest. The vast majority of Americans are workers, employed and unemployed. We have very specific and common economic self-interests. However, we have no broadly based political organization

with a political program, from which to educate and organize, to advance those common economic self interests.

Armed with our own political party and program we can begin the hard work to advance a political agenda for America's majority. For starters, in such a program the government would guarantee jobs or income, with health care and quality education to every American. It would guarantee food and housing. It would guarantee a quality of life to every American – the same quality of life that is slipping away for more and more desperate Americans today. It's our future. It's up to us to shape that future in the interests of the majority.



**Help Us
Continue
Telling
The Truth**

Those of us who seek fundamental social change are engaged in a battle to win the hearts and minds of the people. This can't be done without a revolutionary press. For 40 years, the People's Tribune has brought our readers the stories of those who are struggling to move forward in a world where corporate power is threatening to crush them. Along with those stories, we try to offer some strategic perspective to help put the struggle in context and point the way toward victory. We need your help to continue doing this. The People's Tribune gets no grants and has an all-volunteer staff. We rely completely on subscriptions and donations from our readers to enable us to go on telling the truth. Please donate whatever you can. See the subscription/donation form on the right. You can also donate using Pay Pal on our web site, www.peopletribune.org.

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Hands Up Ministry Abuses The Poor!

By Lenette Evans

Here in Benton Harbor, Michigan, at the Playland Bingo Hall over on Nickerson near the I-95 overpass, the so-called Rev. Bruce Williams (Hands Up Ministry) is known to many in the community for handing out food to the poor on Saturdays throughout the year.

Around 8:30 in the morning people come from all over in Berrien County to get FREE food. Many that come are poor and disabled elderly who cannot stand in the long lines outside for an hour or two. Why should people have to wait so long to get free food?

Because volunteers at the Bingo Hall go through all the boxes, put-

they are desperate and cannot afford to shop at a grocery store. Throughout the week the food is gathered from stores and farmers, and then Bruce Williams stores it in a storage unit and lets it rot all week until by Saturday most of it is beyond human consumption.

When Jesus fed the five thousand did he not give his very, very best to all of us? YES HE DID and we are to treat others the same way.

PROVERBS 19:17: "He Who Is Kind To The Poor Lends To The Lord, And He Will Reward Him For What He Has Done".

I remember a few Saturdays ago there was a woman and her elderly sister who could hardly stand or walk. They had waited for a few hours just to get some bread and oranges. Bruce Williams knew this but allowed the volunteers to load up huge bags of bread, oranges, apples, and vegetables for themselves while this woman and her sister waited so patiently, because, as they told me, they are so poor they cannot afford to shop at a store anymore. That day they left with nothing but tears!

The FREE food that Bruce Williams gives away comes with a huge price tag. If you happen to grab the wrong loaf of bread or get vegetables out of the wrong box he will hatefully yell and scream at you, as I have witnessed many times.

Bruce Williams is NO MAN OF GOD but acts like the devil in dis-

guise, taking advantage of the poor and verbally abusing them in the process.

Berrien County seriously needs to put a stop to Bruce Williams and what he is doing, deceiving the poor and homeless to whom this food is supposed to go.

MARK 4: 22 "For whatever is hidden is meant to be disclosed, and whatever is concealed is meant to be brought out into the open".

People everywhere are hurting, but Bruce Williams does not need to treat the poor with such disrespect. He needs to change his attitude and start having the heart of God towards others. People of all walks of life are to be treated with RESPECT, and LOVE!



Hands Up Ministry.

PHOTO /LENETTE EVANS

The food comes in boxes that are dropped off early in the morning and contains fruit, vegetables, snacks, and bread from local farmers, grocery stores, and bakeries.

ting the better quality fruit and veggies in other boxes against the wall, and then charge the poor \$5.00 each.

Most of the free food is rotten and of poor quality, but people come because



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VISION AND THE FIGHT FOR A NEW SOCIETY

Where there is no vision, the people perish

Editor's note: This column is a place for revolutionaries to debate why a cooperative society is a practical solution to the problems people are fighting out. We welcome your articles.

By Nelson Peery

The America the world admired, studied and strove to emulate was an America of vision and visionaries. Few remember the real-life Jefferson who amassed a fortune purchasing kidnapped Africans, enslaving them and cruelly working them to death. The Jefferson who gave the world the vision of a country where all are created equal and a government that derives its power from the people is immortal.

As America grew, the antagonism between its vision and its capitalist reality deepened. Thousands of citizens stepped forth to defend that vision from the slave owning, expansionists that sought to destroy it. Poverty, physical attacks and murder did not deter them.

One hundred fifty years of slander has not tarnished John Brown's vision of an America free from slavery and exploitation. That vision, the soul of Old John Brown, is still marching on.

Defying a world gripped by reaction and slavery, Abe Lincoln gave humanity the vision of a nation--not a country--a nation conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. This vision--stronger than embattled armies--rewrote the Constitution and became a bea-

con for the downtrodden of the earth.

During World War II, as the forces of fascism threatened to engulf all humanity, it was the vision of a "free New World" that sustained American soldiers fighting from Normandy to the Solomon Islands.

We have always been a nation of vision and visionaries. Vision has always rallied and sustained us during times of crisis. Vision has played a greater role in describing America than perhaps any other country.

Today our country, shorn of vision and its ability to dream, is known by its stockpile of nuclear arms, bullying of nations, and slaughter of the world's poor striving to be free. It is known for its greed and its state-sanctioned selfishness. We are seen as a nation where vision was slain by the sword.

What happened to our country? The dull and leaden mind of America is the harvest of anti-communism planted during the McCarthy era. It is the harvest of greed planted by President Reagan. As they planted their malignant crop, every lofty vision, condemned as communist, was forsaken. Equality for the minorities and women, peace and finally democracy itself, was branded "communist" and forbidden. There was nothing left save consumerism and greed. Reagan elevated this malignancy to the level of a national program. America lost its way as it lost its vision. Vision is a statement of where we are striving to go.

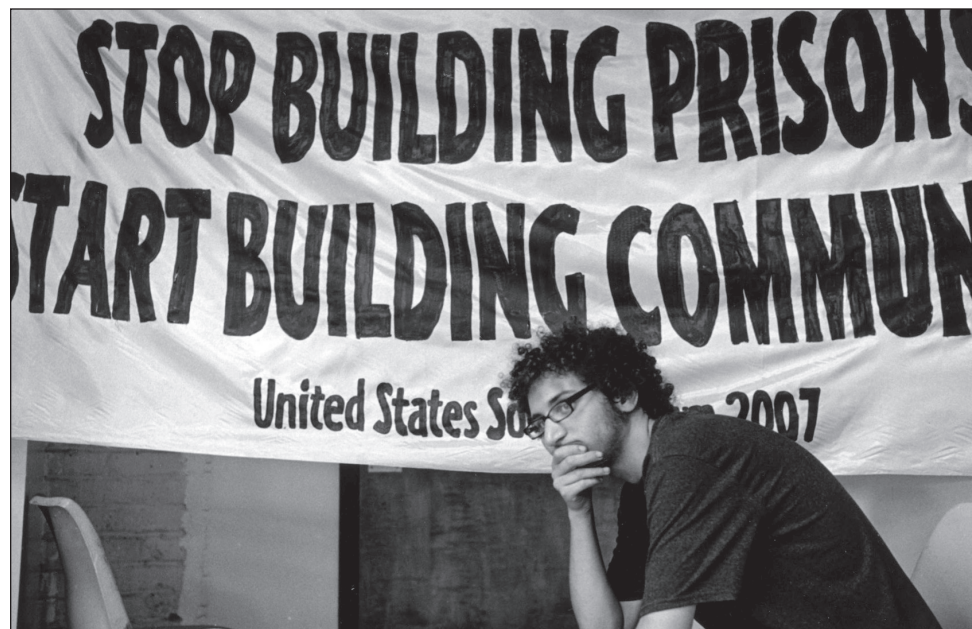
Clarity of vision by the people is the ultimate defense against misleaders. Any tyrant can take a nation that doesn't know

where it is going down any path. Now, more than any time since WWII, our country desperately needs a clear vision.

Vision arises from material possibilities. We have, in the new electronic production, the possibility of doing away

property for the public welfare. If we do not, this concentration of wealth and power will be used to crush us.

America is dangerously close to following other great nations who, losing their way, stumbled into the ash-



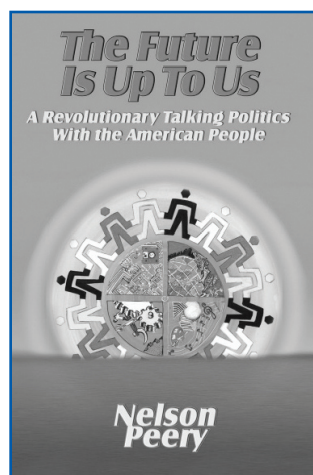
US Social Forum, Atlanta, 2007.

PHOTO / HARVEY FINKLE

with stultifying toil forever. We can do away with poverty and privilege. We can create a world of love and peace. First, we must take these marvelous means of production away from those who use them only to create profit, poverty and privilege. We must convert them from private property to public

bins of history. Perhaps Henry Miller was thinking of this moment when he warned, "The tragedy of Greece lies not in the destruction of a great culture, but in the abortion of a great vision."

The future is up to us.



The Future Is Up to Us! by Nelson Peery

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People's Tribune Editorial Board

Mark Webber Discusses His New Film, 'EXPLICIT ILLS'

By Sandy Reid and Bob Lee

Editor's note: The reviews of Mark Webber's new film, Explicit Ills, have been extremely favorable. Writer Scott Weinberg calls the film, "Brief, honest, and admirably to-the-point." He says, "Explicit Ills follows a group of seemingly unrelated South Philadelphia folks who try to lead normal, happy, anonymous lives — but their station on the lower rung of the income scale means that even the most basic requirements remain frustratingly out-of-reach. (In one key scene, an excellent Rosario Dawson is denied asthma medicine for her sick little boy — because she cannot afford the \$55 price tag.)" "The lyrical and moving drama finds its core as all members come together in their fight for justice and self-discovery," says Alex Billington. The People's Tribune interviewed Webber during the recent Chicago premiere of his new film.

PT: Mark, why did you make the film?

Mark: I wanted to make a film that people could identify with and have an emotional reaction to. And I wanted to tell a story of youth who are ar-

ticulate and smart. I wanted to portray the movement as it really is and kind of subversively tie it into an art form.

PT: How do you see the situation in the country in relation to the poor people's movement?

Mark: I think the movement is going great. More and more people are experiencing poverty and issues such as healthcare. There seems to be a greater consciousness happening. It's my job to let people who start to gain an awareness know that there is a movement that exists that people can link up with. They can start to channel their energy and their efforts — as opposed to just being frustrated about the way the world is and staying frustrated by yourself.

PT: What's your vision for the future?

Mark: I see a better place. I see a better world based on people's basic needs being met. I think it is human nature to have compassion and love for one another. I see a total deconstructing of our current system and the way this country is run. I see peace and happiness amongst people. That's what I see.



From left to right, Mark Webber, his mother, Cheri Honkala, and his grandmother, Geri Okkelberg.

PHOTO /SANDRA REID

PT: What is the next step for the film?

Mark: We have a deal with a company called Peace Arts. It will come out on DVD. It will open up in New York, LA, Philadelphia, Illinois, Minnesota.

PT: Great job! It was very engaging.

Mark: Thanks. I'm glad you liked it. I learned a lot. It's the first one. I just want to keep doing it.

Tell the Truth About the Health Care Crisis and the Demand for the 'Single Payer' Solution

By Cathleen Williams

On May 15, 2008, Sacramento's Homeless Leadership Project traveled to Oakland to testify at the Truth Commission and Public Hearing on Health Care sponsored by the Women's Economic Agenda Project, a social justice organization based in Oakland. We joined leaders who came from Merced, in California's Central Valley, from San Jose and San Francisco and from neighborhoods in Oakland, testifying on behalf of unions and homeless settlements, on behalf of church groups and youth groups, on behalf of County agencies and community health clinics.

All these witnesses told the story of harsh injustice in health care at the microphone and at the podium, and called for a public "single payer" universal

health care system that would eliminate costly private insurance. It would cover all people living in the United States from birth to death, built by a broad social movement led by people struggling with the exorbitant cost and poor quality of health care, especially by poor people who are exposed to the worst abuses of the current system.

Nancy Lewis, nurse practitioner on the front lines at Huckleberry's Cole Street Youth Clinic and Hawkins Village in Visitation Valley in San Francisco,

told the story of dedicated staff, defying cutbacks in service, refusing to turn desperately ill patients away who turn to the clinic because it is the only resource

for people without insurance.

Shamako Noble of the Hip Hop Congress, which

uses the culture of Hip Hop to inspire often disenfranchised youth to get involved in social action, civic service, and cultural creativity, rapped out rhymes to expose the systemic denial of health justice.

John, from Sacramento's Homeless

"All these witnesses told the story of harsh injustice in health care, and called for a public "single payer" universal health care system that would eliminate costly private insurance. It would cover all people..."

Organizing Committee's Leadership Project, took the microphone to speak not only on behalf of homeless people denied health care but also to point out that lack of care for infectious diseases threatens the whole community.

And Ethel Long-Scott, from the Truth Commission sponsor, the Women's Economic Agenda Project, brought down the rafters with an impassioned call to action — as her message in the Truth Commission program emphasized:

Story continues on the bottom of page 8.

Homeless Victory in Fresno Has Implications for the Nation

By Mike Rhodes

Homeless people and their allies won a legal victory in Fresno that could have nationwide implications. The class action lawsuit against the City of Fresno resulted in a \$2.3 million settlement and has stopped the city from taking and immediately destroying homeless peoples' property. Fresno mayor Alan Autry argued that the city had a right to keep city streets clean and that city sanitation workers were just doing their job. Government agencies in communities throughout the country make the same argument as they conduct sweeps through homeless encampments. The Federal Court in Fresno found that these sweeps are illegal and violate the 4th and 5th amendment of the U.S. constitution.

"The Court's ruling and the settlement should send a strong message to other cities throughout California that if they violate the rights of their most vulnerable residents, they will be held accountable," said ACLU-NC staff attorney Michael Risher. The homeless plaintiffs in the lawsuit, Kincaid v. Fresno, were represented by a team of attorneys from the American Civil Liberties Union of Northern California (ACLU-NC), the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights (LCCR) and the law firm of Heller Ehrman LLP.

The lawsuit began two years ago, after the City of Fresno repeatedly used

bulldozers to plow through homeless encampments in the downtown area. The city's policy, designed by a low ranking police officer in the code enforcement

department, backed up by police officers, who would then clear the area of anything that the homeless did not remove. The city claimed that everything



The homeless in Fresno and their advocates achieved an enormous victory when a Federal Court approved a settlement of over \$2 million for the destruction of their personal property. The photo is at the Federal Courthouse, immediately after the settlement was announced. The person in the photo (center) is Pamela Kincaid. She was the lead plaintiff in the case who died under suspicious circumstances on August 1, 2007.

PHOTO /MIKE RHODES

division, was to provide residents of the encampments with written notice that a "clean up" was about to take place. Many homeless people say they never received a copy of the notice and it is not clear, from the courts decision, if it would have made any difference if they did receive the notice. According to the city's policy and testimony in court, the city would then deploy the sanitation

left was rubbish. The problem with the policy, according to the court, was that it treated poor peoples' property differently than anyone else. For example, if you loose your bike and the police find it, they do not call in a bulldozer, crush the bike, and put it in a garbage truck. The likely policy would be to take the bike into possession and try to find the owner.

Homeless people in Fresno, during

the sweeps conducted between 2004 - 2006 lost bicycles, tents, clothing, their ID, and everything of value they had in the world. One person lost an urn that contained her grand-daughter's ashes. Al Williams, who is homeless, suffered the effects of the raids on three occasions. In addition to losing clothes and food, his wife's wheelchair was destroyed and her medicines confiscated by Fresno police officers. "I felt like everything was taken away from me, but this settlement gives me hope for the future for myself and all the other people who suffered," said Williams.

In addition to the lawsuit, homeless people and their allies held a sleep in at City Hall, the Homelessness Marathon radio show was broadcast from Fresno putting a national spotlight on this city's illegal practices, and intense pressure was brought upon city government to end their attacks on the homeless. The efforts have had an effect and Mayor Autry has declared the city's previous policy a failure. The stated goal of the new policy is to provide affordable and decent housing for all of Fresno's chronically homeless residents.

For a list of articles and documents about the struggle for civil liberties for homeless people in Fresno, see: <http://www.fresnoalliance.com/home/homelessness.htm>

Thousands Rally for Healthcare in San Francisco



PHOTO /BILL CARPENTER

Between 2,500 and 3,000 people gathered for a very spirited "Heathcare-Yes, Insurance Companies-NO" rally outside the Moscone convention center in San Francisco on June 19. The largest contingents came from the CSEA-California School Employees Association and California Nurses Association unions and the California Universal Health Care Organizing Project. Many other labor, community and political organizations mobilized significant contingents. Inside the center, insurance executives and their political mouthpieces were attending the convention of the American Health Insurance Association. In order to enter, many of the attendees had to pass by hundreds of workers chanting, "Shame, Shame, Shame." Many rally speakers testified about having been denied health care by insurers when suffering life-threatening diseases. Others spoke of family members who had died after denial of benefits. The main theme of the rally was the need for a universal health care system. Bill Hackwell, from the ANSWER Coalition, provided this information.



PHOTO /BILL HACKWELL

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Right to the City Holds ‘March on the Mayors’

By Joseph Phelan
Miami Workers Center

The historic Right to the City March on the Mayors is over. On June 19 and 20, grassroots members of community organizations from throughout the country flooded Miami to launch a national fight for the right to live, work, build community, and govern their cities. After a summit and a rainy march, residents and city community members from across the U.S. spent two days discussing strategies to build a national movement. At the end of Sunday people left our tropical city, ready to return home and build a mass movement, bringing with them lessons and new connections to strengthen their work.

Report (excerpts)

After a summit on Thursday, June 19 (Juneteenth), and a rainy but inspiring march on June 20, the Right to the City Alliance held two days of movement strategy round-table discussions.

During these two days over 200 resident delegates of grassroots organizations from cities across the U.S. elevated the dialogue. Instead

of discussing the need to build a national urban movement for justice, the weekend’s conversation centered on how to build that movement now.

During the round table discussions resident delegates addressed five challenges facing the Right to the City Alliance organizations as it begins to build a broader movement.

Challenge #1 - Building the base of grassroots organizations to scale and building the leadership of the base.

Challenge #2 - Expanding alliances with new and different sectors to win power.

Challenge #3 - Amplifying our voice and shifting public debate.

Challenge #4 - Building democratic and economic institutions in order to maintain and support our work.

Challenge #5 - Building public governance through voter engagement and participation in governmental structures.

In between the two days of strategy conversations, Right To The City threw a party. Lifted up by the funky sounds

of the Power U Band and the beats of DJ Doormouse and DJ Madame Turk, people danced into the night. “We can’t spend all of our time in meetings or actions. Some things we need to work out on the dance floors. Our movement needs to be grounded in the cultures we come from,” said Gihan Perera of the Miami Workers Center.

While Right To The City delegates were debating strategy and movement building outside the mayors’ conference, LeKedra Robertson was inside lobbying mayors to divest from corporations found to be profiteering from Hurricane Katrina recovery efforts. According to LeKedra “Everyone was receptive of information. Having the Caribbean a part of the solidarity is important as Carnival Cruise is one of the companies we are focusing on.”

As Sunday wrapped up and delegates carried their bags to airport shuttles, many stopped to say goodbye to each other, tired but smiling. In the end, a fabulous fiesta for self-congratulating politicians was marked by public scrutiny. As it should be. The Right to the City Alliance is joining a global movement to bring the public back into politics. This is a movement



Right to the City holds march on mayors in Miami

PHOTO /MIAMI WORKERS CENTER

that takes aim at gentrification and the global role of cities, grasps the tools of human rights and democracy, and rests on the foundation of resident and community power. We are blending the best of mobilizations and direct actions with community-based power building and long-term campaigns for change.

This is just the beginning. Stay tuned for anniversary activities for Hurricane Katrina and the U.S. Conference of Mayors 2009.

Health Care Crisis (continued from p. 6)

Our nation has an amazing opportunity right now. We have the resources to give good health care to everyone who lives here. We have the opportunity to end the agonizing worry and unnecessary suffering of so many people about their health care. What stands in the way is...the idea that nothing can be done unless some company can make a profit from it. Our goal is to help all of America’s people get quality health care while eliminating poverty.

California faces a rising tide of people who are uninsured – roughly 2.2 million more in 2006 than the previous year. State Medicaid offers the lowest reimbursement rate per capita in the nation. In Los Angeles, as reported in the New York Times, 15 acute care hospitals have closed since 2000 – the latest is Martin Luther King Jr.-Harbor, which was opened after the Watts uprisings. Once the “jewel” of that community, it was closed in August, sending poor residents scrambling for care at

scattered, overburdened clinics and ambulances travelling the streets for miles to look for emergency rooms to accept the severely ill and injured. This is the situation across the country – Grady Hospital, the only source for care for poor people in Atlanta, especially for the undocumented, was recently “privatized” and is under continuing pressure to close because it has no funding.

The message of the Truth Commission is that we can do it – the social movement for health care, powered by the millions of homeless and poor people can make a public (“single payer”) health care system a reality.

Here are the seven building blocks of unity for the “Single Payer” health care system:

One Tier:
One payer for all medical costs, one standard of care.

Universal Care Now:
Everyone in, Nobody Out!

Public Accountability and Control:
Not corporate control

Comprehensive Coverage:
All health needs, prescriptions, and long term care.

Choice:
Freedom to choose physicians and other providers.

Protection of Health, Not Profits:
Eliminate insurance, advertising, administration, and the squandered costs of a profit based system

Just Transition: Protect the income and benefits of displaced workers now employed in processing insurance claims and other functions by providing training and new placements.



Healthcare Rally, San Francisco

PHOTO /BILL HACKWELL

Teachers Need Strategy and Vision in Fight for Public Education, Says Teacher

By Bob Lee

CHICAGO—As in many U.S. cities, teachers and parents in Chicago are involved in a struggle with the corporations and city government over the ongoing efforts to close some schools and to privatize others. Against the backdrop of this escalating assault on public education – and a related war going on within the Chicago Teachers Union – some Chicago teachers, organized as the Caucus of Rank and File Educators, invited Jinny Sims to Chicago to address them. Sims, of Vancouver, British Columbia, is past president of the British Columbia Teachers Federation (BCTF).

After the Liberal Party was elected to power in British Columbia in May 2001, it began a continuing assault on public education that included tax cuts that would undermine funding for education, school closings, the destruction of teachers' collective bargaining rights, and moves to strip teachers of their professional authority. In October 2005, the BCTF began a historic strike in defiance of the law and in support of their rights as workers and the right of their students to a quality public education. The two-week strike got support from students, parents, other unions and teachers across Canada, as well as international support. The teachers went back to work after two weeks, having won much of what they struck for and vowing to continue fighting.

In Chicago on June 7, Sims told a group of teachers, "The state of public education is at a crossroads around the

globe, not just in the U.S. All around the world the corporate agenda is about privatization of schools and the safety net, about the dismantling of systems to help those who can't just look after themselves. It's not only about education, but education is a prime target, for the very reason it was put into place – public education is the cornerstone of democracy."

She noted that the corporations push standardized testing because the test results can be used to attack the professionalism of teachers and justify replacing public schools with charter and private schools. Such testing also "does damage to the learning process," said Sims. "Critical thinking, the arts, the liberal side of education, gets destroyed."

Sims said the BCTF strike got broad backing because the union spent several years before the strike building a base of public support, especially among parents. "Parents are your biggest ally and resource. We invited them to meetings. We told them what was happening [in education]." She said the BCTF strategy also had legal, electoral and political components. The union also spent considerable time consulting with and mobilizing its members to prepare them for political action, said Sims.

She said unions need to fight for social justice around such issues as homelessness and poverty, and she stressed the importance of having a broader vision of the struggle and what's at stake. "You need to build a civil society movement...Democracy is at stake. We have to advocate for publicly funded public education...If you don't act, you're not

going to have the America you have today or would want for your children."

Sims also urged the teachers to "talk to your members, find out what kind of a union they want, and have them help you build it."

In an interview, Sims told the People's Tribune that the corporations are pushing the agenda of privatizing schools now because "It's all about profit, and control and power. At one time we used to have national agendas, and now we have transnational agendas that are being driven not by our politically elected people, but by corporations that are funding a lot of our politicians who are in power, and their goal is profit. And what stands in the way is an educated citizenship, and what stands in the way is that last frontier that they haven't conquered yet, which is that K-12 student. So there's a need to intrude into that and grab our kids at an earlier and earlier age."

Regarding the relationship between education and democracy, she said, "There is a direct link between an informed democracy and an educated population. If you keep the population so busy fighting little skirmishes and working two and three jobs that pay a minimum wage that's not a living wage, and you don't give the children of the poor an education opportunity where they actually are critical thinkers and question the decisions that are made around them, the elite gets to rule, and gets to hold on to the power. It's about the distribution of wealth and the minority having a need to hold on to that wealth for themselves."



Jinny Sims.

PHOTO /BRITISH COLUMBIA TEACHERS FEDERATION



March for Our Lives September 2nd

Dear Friends,

We are writing this letter to ask you to officially endorse the Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign's MARCH FOR OUR LIVES taking place September 2nd in St. Paul, Minnesota beginning 4pm from Mears Park to the Xcel Energy Center.

The march this year is extremely important.

As you read the paper or watch the news, increasing numbers of people are being attacked for being poor in the richest country in the world. From the raids on immigrants in Iowa, the attacks on residents fighting for public housing in New Orleans or even the daily struggles people face to see a doctor or feed their hungry children, we see that something terrible is happening in this country.

We cannot let fear dominate our lives. We must come together against these economic human rights violations

and take back our country.

On September 2nd, let us let this country know that the poor and those united with us are getting organized to take OUR country back regardless of who becomes the next President.

Please email us today with your endorsement. Send your email to cheri@economichumanrights.org.

Also, watch our website, www.economichumanrights.org, for updates and more information.

We look forward to seeing you here on Sept. 2nd in Minnesota!

Bread & Justice,

Cheri Honkala, National Organizer,
Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign

Breaking the Law: Capitalist Penalties vs. Worker Penalties

Editor's note: The editorial below is reprinted from our sister publication, the Tribuno del Pueblo.

Presidential candidates John McCain and Barack Obama remain silent as hundreds of families are ripped apart and a community struggles through the impact of the largest immigration raid in U.S. history. On May 12, federal authorities raided Agriprocessors, the world's largest kosher meat packing plant, in Postville, Iowa, taking nearly 400 workers into custody. The raid and its devastating impact on the community has been in the headlines, but, where is the leadership from our prospective Presidential candidates?

Workers that were taken into custody faced charges including aggravated identity theft, using false Social Security numbers and unlawful re-entry into the U.S. Once arrested, workers were appointed criminal rather than immigration attorneys, which made their cases difficult to defend. Each attorney was assigned approximately 17 clients and had seven days to develop their cases. Workers were then brought into a makeshift court in groups of 10 with their hands and feet in chains and were pressured to take plea deals; 297 workers pleaded guilty and now face five months in a federal prison and deportation.

WAGE, LABOR & IMMIGRATION VIOLATIONS

This process has been cited as the quickest prosecution of immigrants in history. After the rush to prosecute, detained workers have now spoken with attorneys and are reporting appalling abuse and inhumane working conditions. Reports include demanding payment or sex in exchange for jobs, a methamphet-



Agriprocessors, the Kosher meat producer in Postville, Iowa, was raided by ICE last month, when 400 workers, mostly Mexican or Central American, were placed under detention. These mothers and children are greatly affected by the ICE raids. All of these mothers wear ankle detention bracelets with GPS tracking. Their husbands have all been detained by ICE and these women, who also were arrested in the raids, have been released to care for their children. Postville, Iowa is a town that is at the centerpoint of the immigration issue in America.

PHOTO /STAR TRIBUNE/MINNEAPOLIS-ST. PAUL 2008

amine lab in the plant, verbal abuse, and physical abuse including one worker whose eyes were duct-taped shut while beaten with a meat hook. Workers also reported not being allowed to use the restroom during 10-hour shifts, not being compensated for overtime, having "immigration fees" withheld from their paychecks, and that Agriprocessors obtained false identification for its employees.

These serious wage, labor and immigration violations have led workers to file a federal class action lawsuit. The lawsuit argues that, as victims of these crimes, they should be eligible for spe-

cial visas because immigrants are usually protected in cases of abuse and trafficking. In addition, the lawsuit argues that some of the workers who have spouses and children that are U.S. citizens could be eligible for immigration relief. However, due to the speed at which the prosecution was handled, the appointed attorneys did not have time to uncover these issues and properly defend their clients.

Unfortunately, the horror story does not end there. In March 2008, the Iowa Department of Labor cited Agriprocessor with 39 workplace safety violations, including exposure to hazardous chemicals and blood-borne pathogens as well as broken bones, eye injuries and hearing loss. Agriprocessors is also under investigation for violating child labor laws. What punishments has Agriprocessors received for breaking countless wage, labor, safety and immigration laws? To date no charges have been brought against any company official for hiring undocumented workers and the state has reduced fines for the 39 safety violations from \$182,000 to \$42,750.

NEED FOR JUSTICE

Obama, who claims to want to "crack down on employers" who hire undocumented workers, has been silent. McCain has been silent. No response from either in the face of countless human rights abuses and outright illegal behavior. The lack of penalty to Agriprocessors clearly demonstrates that the priority is not workers' rights. The similarity of their platforms on

immigration reform is striking. Both want to seal the borders before any other action and neither speak directly or decisively about stopping the raids.

Closing the border does not deal with the economic policies, like NAFTA and CAFTA, that create the conditions where workers need to leave their home countries to survive. The government has been approaching the issue of immigration reform through the lens of closing the borders for decades and yet people are still migrating. The only real result has been the terror that workers and families are subjected to in a raid or while trying to cross the border. This is not a solution this is torture.

We need to demand a real and humane solution to the problem that addresses the root causes of the problem. The government flagrantly disregarded the rights of these workers and the well being of their community members both documented and undocumented while letting immoral and illegal company officials off with a slap on the wrist. This is not about obeying laws, this is about continuing the capitalists' ability to profit. The government has made its choice to stand on the side of the capitalist. Now, we need to make our choice to stand on the side of all workers. An injury to one is an injury to all.

From *The Xibalba Arcane*

He's gone from Money to Money.
And it doesn't matter Jack's my name
and Morris the name of my grandfather,
and I came from New York City or I live
in San Francisco. There is no New York City
or San Francisco. They're the same as
Minnesota or Toronto. They're Money.
Jack Morris has gone from Money to Money.
Even across the border.
That's the new world order,
whose fleece is widespread snow,
whose Death has a wild hunger for poor marrowbones,
whose guzzle is hemo.

The razorkeen cold
knives the rags we're wearing to ribbons.

—Jack Hirschman

Iowa Teacher Describes Horror of Immigration Raid

Editor's note: Below are excerpts from a letter, circulated on the web by the Sisters of Charity in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, from a school teacher in Postville, Iowa, about her experiences on May 12 as the largest ICE immigration raid in history was unfolding. During the raid, the entire town was surrounded and nearly 400 people arrested.

Yesterday, our town was raided by 400 FBI agents, ICE agents (formerly known as INS), state troopers, and a variety of other agencies. We had helicopters flying overhead for hours,

all roads were blocked coming into and going out of Postville,...Ironically, as this all transpired, I was at the county courthouse with my Government class, so that they could see first hand how our judicial system works...

I received calls from the school not to come back to school because I have students they were concerned about. (Yes, they are undocumented students who have been in this district since they were in fourth grade...)

...We made it back into Postville,... We have 150 students with no parents to go home to. We are told that we

need to stay with them until we find out where their parents are or a relative that will care for them until their parents are found. Many of these kids lost both parents due to the raid...

...as a human being and as a parent, I find it disturbing to see little elementary kids crying for their parents and asking you to take them home, and all one can say is, I am sorry, or we are looking for them. By the way, we got no information from ICE as to who they arrested, and whether or not their parents were being detained. At this point, I just wanted to go home and hug my own kids...

Today, I am missing about half of my students. Some have taken off for Chicago, others are hiding in town, some were arrested, and others are at the Catholic Church...

Interestingly enough, my US History students made a direct correlation between what we all witnessed yesterday to our history lesson three weeks ago. We have been studying W.W.II and the Holocaust. I had them view the movie 'Schindler's List' and the things that happened in the movie, with the Nazis rounding up the Jews, having them report their names and families' names, transporting them to unknown places, keeping them in substandard holding areas, and then getting rid of them, was very much like what happened yesterday, with one exception, the US has not practiced the use of genocide.

ICE is today doing house to house searches of every home and apartment that has a Hispanic name attached to it. It is rather scary to see search teams go from place to place, looking for immigrants.

We had agencies at the school a month ago with a subpoena to seize all student and employee files. Any name that sounded remotely Hispanic was flagged. I find this to be a form of racial profiling,...

How quickly we forget our own histories. Many of our ancestors came here with nothing to their names and very little to survive on...Why not go after the people who really are doing something illegal and wrong? Like drug dealers or child molesters? If we spent as much money on those items as we are currently spending on the War in Iraq...or on building a 700 mile long wall on the Mexican border which is actually 2300 miles long, we would maybe live in a better economy that was safe for our families.



ICE officials line up detainees by the white van before heading into Electric Park for court on the National Cattle Congress grounds in Waterloo, Iowa Thursday, May 15, 2008.

AP PHOTO, THE WATERLOO COURIER/MATTHEW PUTNEY

FREE GAS, USA

By Pastor Mary Gault

The hottest topic of conversation these days appears to be the price of gasoline. Fingers of blame point to dwindling oil reserves, other countries, consumption, speculators, oil guzzling vehicles, and the falling value of the U.S. dollar. Businesses are raising their prices

to cover the extra cost for transportation of their goods. The higher prices impact all of us to varying degrees. In order to get your business, gas stations, grocery stores, car dealerships, and even realtors, are offering the public free gasoline.

But the most affected are those whose income falls

at or below the poverty level. They are the ones who have no cushion to cover any higher prices. Food, clothing, medicine and gasoline to name a few living expenses, all are increasing with no promise of relief. Getting to work now becomes problematic in areas without adequate public transportation.

Therefore, to help those in need a new 501(c)(3) charity has been formed. It is called Free Gas USA, Inc. and is based in Kalamazoo, Michigan. (Visit our website at: <http://www.freegasusa.org/>) It's mission states: Recognizing the importance of gasoline as a means to sustain our nation's economy, Free Gas USA, Inc. is dedicated to provide advocacy and financial grant assistance for needy Americans. In order to facilitate this goal we partner with public, private, philanthropic and religious organizations to maintain and/or enhance the dignity and overall quality of life of our clients.

Food Mart	
Regular Gasoline	479 ⁹ / ₁₀
Plus Gasoline	489 ⁹ / ₁₀
V-Power	499 ⁹ / ₁₀
esel #2	509 ⁹ / ₁₀

PHOTO DONATED
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From *The Blood About the Heart*

there will be a time
when the world no longer maims us
no I mean they who after picking our pockets
knock us down and kick us in the head
that's why so many of us go along lame
you on one aluminum crutch and one stick picked up
from some waste place walking along in hunger and want
pain and deprivation warping your limbs
if all men were one man he would be you
dragging yourself along you pull us all forward

—Sarah Menefee

VOICES FROM BENTON HARBOR, MI

PINKNEY SENT TO PRISON

In a miscarriage of justice the likes of which many of us have never observed in any courtroom, Rev. Edward Pinkney's probation violation hearing ended with the judge sentencing him to a minimum of 36 months to 120 months. Attorney Elliott Hall said an appeal will be filed immediately. A more detailed report will follow on our next step in the ongoing battle for democracy and against corporate power in Benton Harbor. Funds are urgently needed. Please send to: BANCO, 1940 Union St., Benton Harbor, MI 49022
— Pinkney Defense Committee

More Liquidation of Rights

By Pastor Mary Gault

Thursday, June 26, 2008, corporate power raised its ugly head again in the Berrien County Courthouse at the probation violation hearing of Rev. Edward Pinkney. The contrived violation was on the grounds that an article he wrote quoting Deuteronomy 28 was a threat to the life of the trial judge, Judge Butzbaugh. While on the stand, Rev. Pinkney's probation agent, when asked how he knew about the article, said that a colleague not assigned to the case brought him the article. Then he, as probation agent, his supervisor, and the prosecutor brought the probation violation against Rev. Pinkney. No testimony was given that Judge Butzbaugh brought forth the complaint as a threat on his life. They also took offense at his calling the judge a racist and for being corrupt. Isn't it interesting that for years Rev. Pinkney showed up in the courtrooms in the Berrien County Courthouse wearing t-shirts calling the judges

and prosecutors "Benton Harbor's Most Wanted," without interference? More interesting is that Rev. Pinkney had reported to his probation agent an hour before he was arrested yet no mention was made to him of a violation nor did they detain him at that time. Rev. Pinkney's arrest came on the coattails of a very successful rally in Benton Harbor whose guest speaker was former congresswoman Cynthia McKinney. One can only make the deduction that corporate and governmental powers saw this as too big a threat and decided to remove Rev. Pinkney farther from the community by sending him to prison. The presiding judge assigned more power to Rev. Pinkney than Moses by saying he was able to call upon God to carry out this so-called threat and God would obey. As a pastor, I look at this as government ignoring the Constitution by breaching our right to religious belief and ability to freely preach the word of God. This court also trampled over the constitutionally protected freedom of speech.

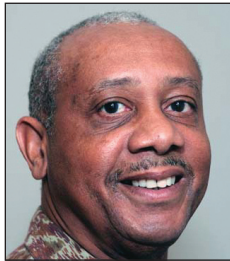


Supporters of Reverend Pinkney outside Berrien County Courthouse.

PHOTO /PEOPLES TRIBUNE

FREE PINKNEY!!

Ways You Can Help:



- 1) Get big name individuals to stand in support with Rev. Pinkney.
- 2) Raise funds for the appeal.
- 3) Connect other redevelopment and environmental struggles with the Benton Harbor struggle.
- 4) Send donations to Pinkney Defense, 1940 Union St., Benton Harbor, MI 49022. Call 269-925-

0001. Visit Banco website for up to date news at bhbanco.blogspot.com/

NOTE: The mass demonstration on July 19 is being rescheduled.

Corporate Power and the Pinkney Case

By the People's Tribune

The arrest of Rev. Pinkney for utilizing his right to free speech and the indirect warning to the Peoples Tribune for publishing those thoughts needs to be seen for what they are. They are a step from the legal into the political arena to strip the people of their right to freedom of expression. It is a small part of the motion toward fascism in this country.

Background

Rev. Pinkney became known as the leader of the community based on his almost daily presence at the Berrien County Courthouse. He exposed the racism of the criminal justice system and the willful inadequacy of the defense provided to the poor, mostly Black defendants.

During this period, the struggle by Whirlpool and the real estate interests to develop Benton Harbor into a playground for the rich was raging. The question continued to be in whose

interests was the redevelopment proceeding? In 2005, Pinkney led a recall of the City of Benton Harbor's most powerful Commissioner, who favored Whirlpool's effort. An all-white jury convicted Pinkney of five counts of improprieties in connection with this election. **What this case represents for America**

The attack on democracy and the conviction of Rev. Pinkney for standing up for the poor shows that the corporate power structure is determined to crush anyone who stands in their way. It symbolizes an entire process under way in America. The once stable working class community of Benton Harbor has been devastated by automation and globalization. The open rule of corporate power is arising to oppose their struggle. The governing bodies that once controlled by buying up the people's leaders now turn to intimidation and brute force.

This case is not about Rev. Pinkney. It is about how a corporate giant like Whirlpool takes over a whole town. It is a harbinger of the future of America if people do not move to take over the corporations before they take over society. Our first battle in this war is the defense of our leaders. A movement that does not defend its leaders cannot grow. Defend Rev. Pinkney. Donate money for the appeal. Take this newspaper out and help awaken America. Make a stand for democracy in Benton Harbor.



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